

VIREYA VINE

ISSUE #68, FEBRUARY, 2003

PUBLISHED BY THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE RHODODENDRON SPECIES FOUNDATION

R.S.F. PO BOX 3798, FEDERAL WAY, WA. 98063
E. White Smith, Editor

From Chris Fairweather
Dear Vireya Vine,

Beaulieu, England
September 2002

This has been a good year for vireya Rhododendrons in U.K. We started off in the spring with an excellent conference in Edinburgh, this was a good opportunity to meet enthusiasts from around the world. In July we set up a display of vireyas at the Hampton court flower show. Luckily we had quite a few in flower, always an uncertain factor when you decide to show these plants. Luckily many lochia hybrids and the species itself coming up trumps. The star plant on our stand was Gwenevere; the scented pale pink flowers looked stunning, and created a lot of comment. Our stand was in the Heritage tent, which was organised very efficiently by the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens. It was interesting to receive public reaction to a range of vireya Rhododendrons that have certainly not been displayed for many years, certainly not in my lifetime.

We sold a lot of young plants. I just hope they survive. Obviously our problem here in U.K. Is our climate? While we can promote vireyas as good patio plants, to use during the frost-free months they do need to come in during our winter. Some of the late flowering hybrids like Java light, Flamenco dancer and First Light make excellent cool conservatory plants that flower in to our autumn and winter. They appear to require the minimum of heat to survive the cold weather. Visiting Plantarium, an annual plant show, held in Boskoop, Holland this summer I was interested to see plants of Rhodo vireya Saxon Glow and Blush on display. A Dutch nursery has taken out plant breeders rights on both these two and raised, I gather, 20,000 for the pot plant trade and plans to do even more next year, after this first successful sales launch. An interesting development that might increase the awareness of vireyas in Europe.

Following some discussion with Sylvia Saperstein in Australia, we did some trials with Bonzi, a dwarfing chemical, to see if we could grow more compact plants. This was given as separate sprays in the spring, applied at weekly intervals. Looking at our trial batch we have produced some interesting results with young bushy two-year-old plants, in some cases covered in flower buds. The old Veitch hybrid Pink Delight has responded very well and should be in flower in a few weeks. Before we can say this is all successful we have to make sure they grow away next spring. I gather that if you overdose with these dwarfing chemicals the plant might not grow again!

The notes from Fran Rutherford on compost are very interesting. Our mix is made up of 50% coarse peat, 30% medium peat, 20% coarse bark, 3kg per m cu Multicote 12, 280 grs per M cu of Intercept (to control vine weevil) 15grs per M cu. of iron This mix has a P.H. of about 4.5 to 5.00. I give no extra feed during the growing season. We are probably using higher rates of fertiliser than many other growers are in UK; this results in green healthy plants? Does the extra feed encourage more flower bud? I wish we knew. Our number one pest is mealy bug. A persistent little insect that we attack with two chemicals. Imidaclopiid and Deltamethrin. It is a constant battle to keep certain hybrids mealy bug free. Any bright ideas gladly received.

Chris Fairweather
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Beaulieu, UK
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From Dick Chaikin

Southern Florida

From a E-mail message to the Vireya group on the Internet February 2002

Hello people, I have been asked to post what I know about growing vireyas in Florida. All my basic learning was accomplished by meeting with John Swisher before he passed away. He had been growing vireyas for many years in the Homestead, Florida area before moving to Key Largo a couple of months before the last big hurricane which wiped out a lot of Fairchild Gardens and surrounding areas. Talk about luck! He left the vast majority of his plants at that house, and those were wiped out including the house. He only took a very few along with him, most notably a zoelleri. I asked him for cuttings, but never got the chance to obtain them.

However, John told me that the best area for growing vireyas was east of the Florida Turnpike. He said that there was a sandy ridge along that line which made that particular area just a tiny bit higher than the rest of lowland Florida. To grow vireyas, he said, you must look around to see if there are coconut palms, for where you can grow coconut palms, you can grow vireyas. Now, for those who do not understand microclimates, and the importance thereof, let me tell you that air flow is similar to water flow. The higher elevations are warmer than the lower, since the cold air drops to those lower levels. I have found that to be quite true. Just a few miles west of my home, the temps go down about 5-7 degrees colder than my area. When one deals with marginally hardy plants, this becomes quite relevant. So much for location.

Dick Chaikin, former owner Cape Cod Vireyas

And about 30 minutes later he wrote (still over the Internet).

Vireyas are generally know to be hardy down to 32 degrees. That means that one or two nights of 32 degrees will injure the leaves and terminal stems. This will not kill the plant, but is Mother Nature's way of pruning. It is well known that the higher elevation vireyas in the wild become better shaped plants, due to this fact, as opposed to those in gardens or pots, which are pampered.

If these plants are exposed to more than a couple of nights of about 32 then more of the plants is injured. – If about 4-5 nights, then the plants will probably be killed down to the ground, BUT NOT BELOW ground. That means that if you should be exposed in this manner, do not take off any dead stems, for much of the plant will grow, maybe even from the base of the trunk.

In 1991, in the San Francisco area, there was a freeze going down to 19 degrees F. This knocked out quite a few vireyas and even some maddeniiis. Unfortunately, this was just prior to the national ARS convention there that year. That freeze started out as a couple of days of temps just below 32, then spiked down to the 19. As mentioned, there were many plants lost, but there was also noted that several came back. There was a collection just south of SF, I think in the Palo Alto area, that lost several plants but not all.

Note that there are no coconut palms in those areas.

I am not afraid of a night or two of sub 32F temps. I am not even afraid of 2 nights of sub 30F. I am afraid of a prolonged spell of more than 3 nights of sub 32F. There are indeed a very, very few vireya hybrids which are a little more cold tolerant, however the difference is just a very few degrees. Pete Sullivan, the prolific hybridizer, who used to work at Strybing Arboretum in San Francisco has a garden that is about 15 feet wide, between two 2 story buildings in the center of SF (not Strybing). During that aforementioned 1991 freeze, none of his plants in the ground were damaged in any way, not even the leaves.

Therefore, I have tried to utilize areas near my home for my inground vireyas since a home or a building affords some protection. I have 10 feet between buildings, so the majority of my collection remnants are there. In the front, there is an 'L' shaped area where I have the rest, protected on the 3rd side by some tropical hibiscus. That area is about 20 ft away from the next house on that side.

In summary, my best recommendation is to pick an area east of the Florida Turnpike, and no further north than Stuart, and to plant near your home for protection from the foundation, otherwise, you will have to resort to protecting them from the cold, and/or moving them into a garage or other shelter whenever the cold does strike.

Dick Chaikin
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Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418
E-mail vireya@yahoo.com

From Joel Freudenthal
Dear Vireya Vine

Near Portland, Oregon
January 2003

Thanks to great reading material like the Vireya Vine and ARS Journal, the kindness and generosity of good "Rhody" friends, my knowledge and collection of Rhododendrons, has grown. Many of my new treasured plants have been rooted from cuttings in a propagation box built from junk around the house, and supplies from the local hardware store.

I have read many articles on how people have built their propagation systems, and wanted to share with anyone interested, how I built fairly simple water heated sweatbox system that has worked well for me.

See drawing on the next page

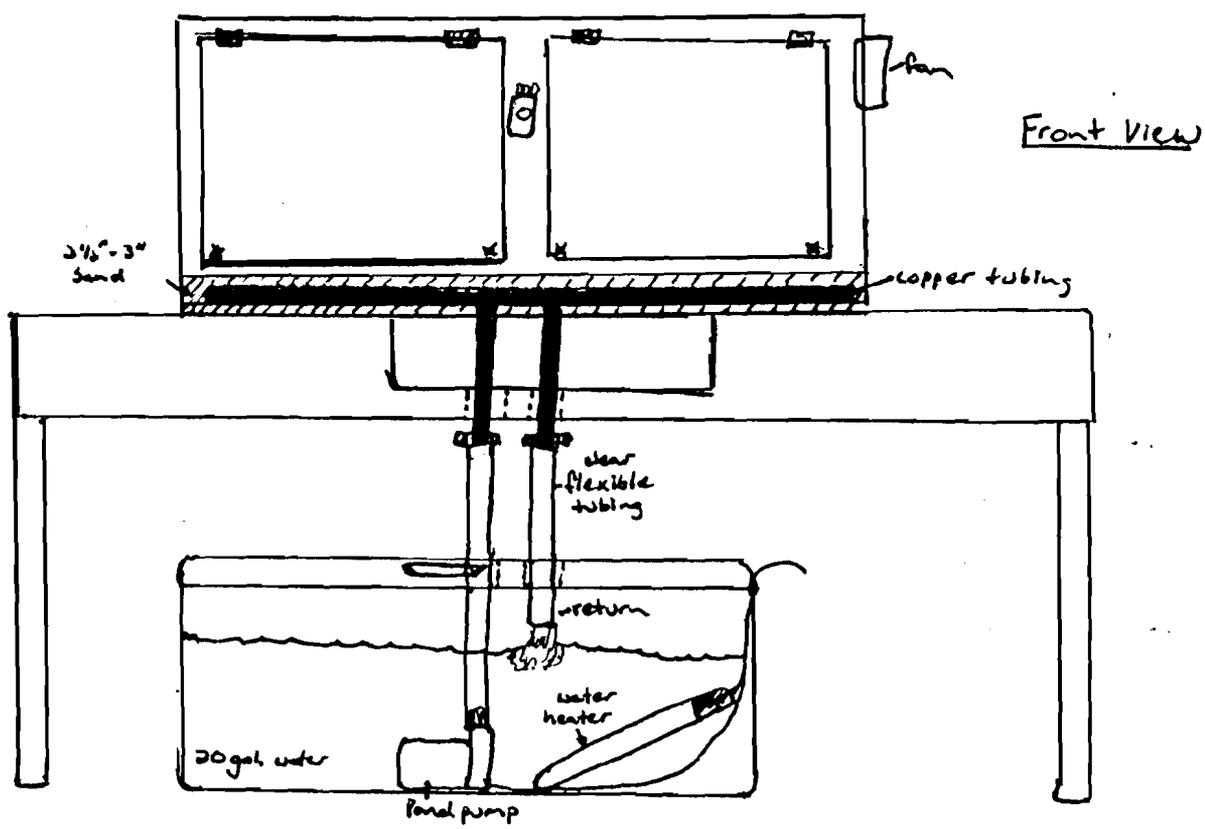
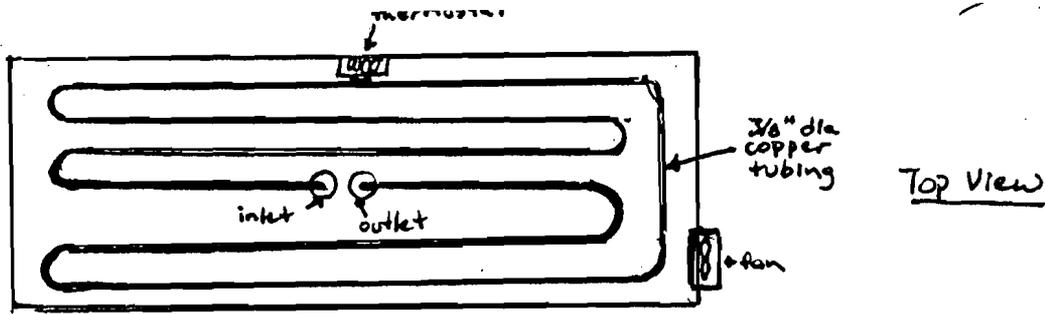
I used an old cracked 18"wide x 18"high X 48"long acrylic fish tank, added a couple access doors to the front, some vent holes on the bottom and a thermostat controlled computer-type cooling fan on the side. The system functions by pumping heated water up from a 20 gallon resevoir, through 3/8" diameter copper tubing laid under 2 1/2" of sand, then back down to the resevoir. The water is heated with a 150wt submersible fish tank heater set at 75 F. It's constantly circulated through the tubing by a 300GPH pond pump. The resevoir is a 20 gal camping type cooler set under the bench.. The copper tubing is sold in 20, 30 and 50-ft rolls of 1/4, 3/8, and 1/2" dia. at the hardware store.

While considering where the inlet and outlet of the copper tubing needed to be, I bent 3/8"dia. copper tubing (with a plumbers type pipe bender) to the desired shape and size from a life size template drawn on a piece of plywood. This was a little difficult for me, and a person could probably talk a local plumber into making this part for them.

I then did a trial run of the system to check for leaks and monitor the temp. of the propagation media. The humidity was initially maintained with a humidifier, but found that it just took up space and was unnecessary when the sand was kept damp manually. Other than watering the plants/media, I have only had to top off the reservoir now and then.

It's been a great system that is easily adaptable to my needs. In the future I would like to automate the watering, and control the water heater based on the temperature of the media rather than the temp. of the water in the resevoir. All in all I have had great success with very little maintenance.

Joel Freudenthal
8570 SW Cherokee St.
Tualatin, OR 97062
503-381-4431



Growing Rhododendrons from Seed

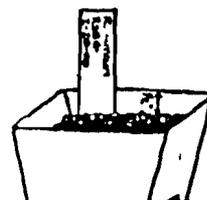
Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden 2525 S 336th St Federal Way, WA 98003
 PO Box 3798 Federal Way, WA 98063 253-838-4646 office (M-F) 253-661-9377 (weekends)

These instructions have been prepared to assist you in the successful propagation of rhododendron seed, and to encourage maximum growth of your seedlings. Growing rhododendrons from seed is a slow process, taking about two years before a plant is large enough to be planted outside. However, with a little patience, there are few gardening pleasures greater than seeing your seedlings bloom for the first time.

Materials

- New or very clean 4-inch pots
- Plastic pot labels
- Plastic flat with no holes
- Clear plastic dome
- Sterile seedling soil mix (coconut fiber or 50% peatmoss, 50% perlite mix)

1. Place seed in the refrigerator in an airtight container until you are ready to sow. Rhododendron seed is short lived at warm temperatures, often dying within a few months. Refrigerated seed will keep for at least one year and often much longer.
2. Moisten the soil mix thoroughly. Many mixes need to be soaked in a bucket of water for 30 - 45 minutes to wet throughout. Mix should be *moist* but not soggy.
3. Fill 4-inch pots with soil mix, leaving about 1/2 inch of space at the top. Do not firm the mix down in the pots. It needs to be light and airy for success.
4. Make labels for the seed you are sowing. A soft lead pencil works the best and lasts the longest on plastic pot labels. Mark each label with the following:

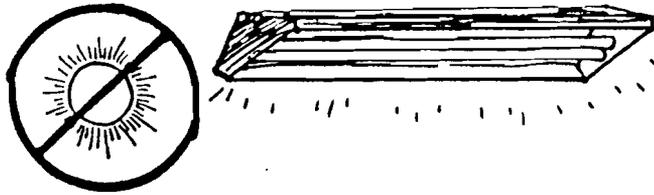
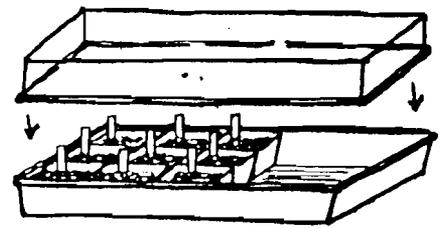


Name of plant

Where the seed came from, seed lot number, collection number

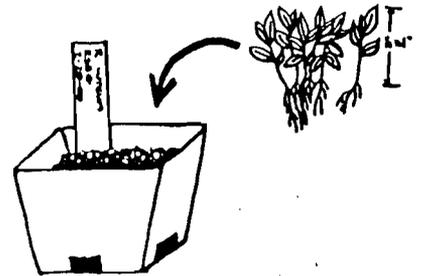
Date sown

5. To sow seeds, work in an area without drafts. Rhododendron seeds are very small and light and can easily be blown away. Sow seeds thinly on the surface of the soil. It is often a good idea to use no more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of the seed. Save the rest in case you need to resow later. Label and place the pot in a clean flat and cover with a clear plastic dome.



6. Keep the flat in a warm spot, 70-75° is ideal, with bright light. A fluorescent light fixture hung about 6 inches above the dome lid works best. Do not place where direct sun will shine on the flat.

7. Seedlings will start appearing in 2-3 weeks. Some may take as long as 6-8 weeks to start germinating. If 8 weeks have passed, and the seed has not germinated, sow the remaining seed. It is important that the soil stays moist. Water with a 20-20-20 fertilizer at $\frac{1}{4}$ the recommended strength every 2 weeks. You can use a misting bottle to gently spray the seedlings with fertilizer water. If you notice mold forming, it can be removed with tweezers and an appropriate fungicide can be used. If you cannot tend your seedlings for a couple of weeks, $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of water can be placed in the flat. The water will wick up the drainage holes and keep things moist while you are away.
8. Keep the seedlings under the plastic dome cover until they are about $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch tall. Keep the soil moist. Once the seedlings reach $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch tall they are ready to be transplanted. Fill a 4-inch pot with a good well-drained potting soil.



Potting Soil: 2 parts fine fir or pine bark
1 part peat moss
1 part perlite or pumice

Carefully separate the seedlings and lightly firm each (or several - which will have to be thinned as the plants grow) into a 4-inch pot. Keep under the lights and keep them moist.

9. Once the plants reach about 2-3 inches tall they can be moved outside into a bright shady location if there is no chance of frost. Seedlings this size will need cover and protection for the first winter.
10. When the plants are about 5-6 inches tall, the seedlings can be transplanted into 6-inch pots. Slow-release fertilizer or organic fertilizer can be mixed with the soil at this time. This size can be grown outside in a protected location year round. During winter protect the pots from severe freezing.



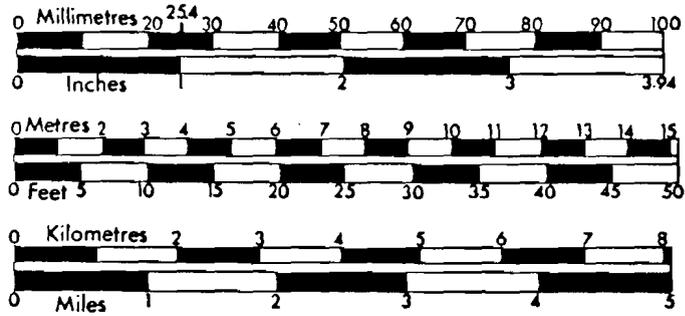
11. After the plants have filled the 6-inch pots, they are large enough to be planted into the ground. It may be best to create a small nursery bed to grow the rhododendrons on for 2 to 3 years before transplanting into the landscape. Most species will reach a blooming size in 7 to 10 years, but some, particularly large leaf types, may not reach blooming size for 15 to 20 years. Fortunately, most of these species have fantastic foliage to enjoy until that time.



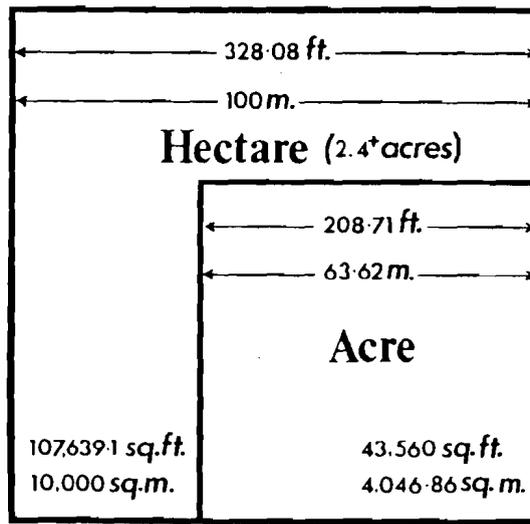
12. Enjoy your rhododendrons!

Metric Comparison Scales

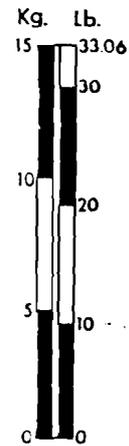
Linear



Area



Weight



And from somewhere else.

Small Quantity Liquid Equivalents

Milliliters	Ounces Decimal	Ounces Fraction	Spoon Volumes	Number of Drops
30ml	1.0 oz.	1 oz.	2 tablespoon (tbsp)	360 drops
22ml	.75 oz.	¾ oz.	1 tbsp + 1 ½ tsp.	270
15ml	.50 oz.	½ oz.	1 tbsp	180
10ml	.34 oz.	1/3 oz.	2 teaspoons (t sp.)	120
7.5ml	.25 oz.	¼ oz.	1 ½ tbsp	90
6.0ml	.20 oz.	1/5 oz.		
5.0ml	.167 oz.	1/6 oz.	1 tsp.	60
4.0ml	.125 oz.	1/8 oz.	¾ tsp.	45
3.0ml	.10 oz.	1/10 oz.	2/3 tsp.	
2.5ml	.08 oz.	1/12 oz.	½ tsp.	30
2.0ml	.06 oz.	1/16 oz.	1/3 tsp.	
1.2ml	.04 oz.	1/24 oz.	¼ tsp.	15
.6ml	.02 oz.		1/8 tsp.	7-8
.3ml	.01 oz.		1/16 oz.	4
.15ml	.005 oz.		1/32 tsp.	2

1 level tablespoon = 3 level teaspoons

1 cupfull = 16 tablespoons or 8 fluid oz. or .5 pint

1 fluid oz. US = 2 tbsp or 29.57ml

1 fluid oz. Brit = 28.41 ml

Some interesting Internet sites

The Bovees Nursery (Lucie Sorensen-Smith)
1737 SW Coronado (E. White Smith)
Portland, OR 97219 USA
(503)-244-9341 or 1-800-435-9250
E-mail - info@bovees.com www.bovees.com
Catalogue is \$2.00 (Mail Order)

Glendoick Gardens (Kenneth & Peter Cox)
Glendoick, Perth Mail Order
Scotland, U.K. PH2 7NS www.glendoick.com
Phone Nursery 073 886 205

D. & P.J. Brown
Vernom Road www.homepages.ihug.co.nz/~brownnz
Te Puna, Tauranga E-mail brownz@actrix.co.nz
New Zealand

Mark Jury
Tikoraugi, RD 43 E-mail jury@xtra.co.nz
Waitara, North Taranaki
New Zealand

Vireya Valley Nursery
Woori-Yallock Road
Cockatoo, Victoria 3781
Australia

Neil & Kathryn Puddey Nursery
PO Box 126, Woolgoolga, NSW
Australia E-mail puddy@bigpond.com

www.vireya.net

www.groups.yahoo.com/group/vireya

VIREYA NURSERIES

Rhododendron Species Foundation
PO Box 3798 www.rhodiegarden.org
Federal Way, WA 98063 USA
(253)-838-4646 Mail Order E-mail rsf@rhodygarden.org

Christopher Fairweather
The Garden Centre, High Street
Beaulieu, Hampshire www.website.lineone/fairweather.com
England SO42 7YR E-mail plantdoc@martex.co.uk

Te Puna Cottage Gardens (John Kenyon)
Te Puna Road, RD6 E-mail TePuna.Cott.Gdns@xtra.co.nz
Tauranga, New Zealand web site at www.vireya.co.nz
Mail Order NZ only Phone (07)552-5756

Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust
Carrington Rd. RD4
New Plymouth E-mail pukeiti@pukeiti.org.nz
New Zealand web site at www.pukeiti.org.nz

The Vireya Venue
2 Clifford Street
Maleny, Queensland 4552
Australia

Pacific Island Nursery (Sherla Bertelmann & Richard Marques)
P. O. Box 1953 E-mail tropical@grcensand.net
Keaau, HI 96749 (808)966-9225
www.pacificislandnursery.com
They also handle the Vireya seed exchange. WorldWide.

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